

**ON
TRACK
OFF
ROAD**







One hand one foot...

Zach Osborne is now able to see better after dispensing with a tear-off and was just one of many motocross Grand Prix stars playing with the big Sevlievo jumps for the opening round of the '11 championship. The spectacular American was fifth overall in MX2. Photo by Ray Archer





MotoGP

Mind that white line Ben...

Maybe Yamaha Factory Racing rider Ben Spies did not adhere this warning enough at a wet Jerez recently. The American was set for a strong second position behind his team-mate Jorge Lorenzo before admitting to backing off for a safe finish and then losing the front wheel of the M1...

Photo: Monster Energy Europe/Milagro







AMA-MX

Fourteen down, three to go...

Chad Reed didn't make the podium of the St Louis supercross last Saturday but his fourth place means that at least four riders now have a decent chance of scooping the 2011 title. The Australian is financing his own racing effort this season and to snare the crown would be a remarkable achievement. Photo by Steve Cox







MX

GRAND PRIX OF BULGARIA

SEVLIEVO • APRIL 10TH

MX1 winner: Clement Desalle, Suzuki

MX2 winner: Ken Roczen, KTM



BULGARIAN BONANZA AS FROSSARD FLIES AND MX2 IS 'ROC-ED'

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer





Roczen (94) claims the GP from this moment onwards

Bulgaria launched six months of Grand Prix racing in the FIM Motocross World Championship and two elements sprung forth from the opening thrusts of action in the MX1 and MX2 categories at Sevlievo. The cold and strong spring winds swept in new machinery, colours, confidence and a startling fresh 'shade' to the series with the black and green of Monster Energy apparent in an exercise of some high-quality branding.

The first standout factor to emerge from proceedings was the unsurprising strength of Red Bull Teka KTM's Ken Roczen. The sixteen year old German fulfilling a great many pre-

race predictions by running away to win both motos by fourteen seconds in the first and over twenty in the second. Not even the teenager could have foreseen such clear dominance in what was his first GP for the Austrian firm; his rivals certainly didn't as CLS Kawasaki's Tommy Searle followed in second position twice and a sizeable distance adrift. "All weekend he was the fastest and got good starts and put those laps in," the Briton said in his first major race in almost a year and first GP since 2008. 'He just went away. I think there are a few guys who are close to his speed but he nailed the starts today and gaped everyone.'



A decent return to GP duty for Tommy Searle

Roczen, the 2010 MX2 world championship runner-up in just his first full season, felt that his recent impressive efforts in the AMA Supercross series had helped his urgent 'escapes', with the motos won from the first laps. 'As soon as they let you go out for practice there everyone is on the gas and I think that helped me out for sure,' said arguably the biggest star in GP racing right now.

'When you out front you don't focus in the same way as you do when you are in a fight,' he continued regarding the challenge he faced. 'I just took it like practice. I was screaming at the backmarkers because it

was difficult sometimes when I came up to a group.'

There is little doubt that Roczen was the sharpest but has had a busy winter and it remains to be seen whether the toil of all that racing and travel will count against him in the depths of July when the world championship calendar is at its hottest and perhaps most important stages. Team-mate Jeffrey Herlings was third overall and lost a top three finish in the first moto with a faulty gearbox while the pacey Gautier Paulin on the new fuel-injected Yamaha and Arnaud Tonus (Bike it Cosworth Wild Wolf Yamaha), running carbs, pushed past the Dutchman.

Let the battle commence. The second MX1 moto between Frossard and Desalle (chasing) was GP motocross at its best



While MX2 was a 'KTM show' it was encouraging to witness the sheer unpredictability of the premier MX1 category is still firmly in place and the duel between Rockstar Energy Suzuki's Clement Desalle and Monster Energy Yamaha rookie Steven Frossard provided the action highlight of the weekend. Their second moto tussle after Frossard had aced the first race on his debut with the factory YZ450FM was the other indelible moment of this Grand Prix, and thankfully people watching online were able to see it after a technical hitch had flattened the ambitious but excellent www.mx-life.tv earlier in the day.

Desalle, the 2010 runner-up, realised he could not afford to let the Frenchman dart-away as he had done during the first salvo and a two lap

battle ensued complete with contact, block-pass attempts and some hard-charging. The dispute animated the circuit but it was a mere diversion for Frossard who eeked a four second gap before then throwing it down the hill with his Yamaha after losing rear-end traction exiting a turn. The pair – both in their early twenties – had been joined by Spaniard Jonathan Barragan by this stage although the works Kawasaki racer could not tail Frossard who set off for Desalle once more with only minutes to go.

A final slip on the last lap by Yamaha's new thoroughbred prevented a snatch-and-grab before the flag and although the duo tied on points Desalle claimed the top step of the podium thanks to the second race ranking.



Perhaps only Frossard and his team knew what he was really capable of in Bulgaria

Frossard refused a handshake as the pair slowed; clearly less than thrilled with some of the line-swapping that took place but did not allude to any frustration post-race in what was still an exceptional first performance in MX1. 'There were some nice moves with Steven,' was all Desalle could offer as the Belgian title-contender fingered his first silverware of the year.

Barragan hoisted his maiden trophy for Kawasaki Racing Team in third while World Champion Tony Cairoli (ninth overall) later limped into the press room to explain that an incident in the first moto had stretched ligaments in the left knee that he had broken in 2008. 'Did you ride with caution in the second moto?'

one journalist asked. 'No, I rode with one leg,' the Sicilian dead-panned.

The Red Bull Teka KTM rider also explained the difficulty that many riders experienced across the hard-pack if they did not get-away from the gate in the top five: 'The track was so bad for passing. You almost had to hit someone to overtake.'

That problem surely will not occur in the wavy, technical and churning sand of Valkenswaard as the Grand Prix of the Netherlands over Easter weekend brings the world championship together for its second rendezvous from fifteen.



Desalle was lucky on the last lap of the first moto when he ran off the track and swallowed this fencing. He lost use of the rear brake and said he would not have lasted much longer

Just in case he wasn't fit enough... Pole man Roczen gets in some more exercise behind the gate



Max Anstie made his GP debut as a full-time world championship runner and was 8th. Interesting road racing technique here



Paulin (21) and Osborne finished 4th and 5th in MX2 respectively on very different Yamahas



Greg Aranda hurt himself in this practice fall and was out of the GP



BULGARIA-BOUND

We first went to Sevlievo in 2002 and the quality of the facility caused a few eyes to widen. Almost ten years on and Sevlievo has been a regular and well-funded stop on the calendar since '06, and with the rutty and rough track found in 2010 the riders were almost universally singing the praises of what is normally an awkward trip east. For the second year in a row I was packing a bag for Bulgaria and was wondering how long the financial backing from the government for the event would continue to allow it to be the crucial opening spectacle of the season. Especially with cuts in Catalunya sacrificing what had been a well-oiled machine at Bellpuig and Portugal staggering through an economic minefield.

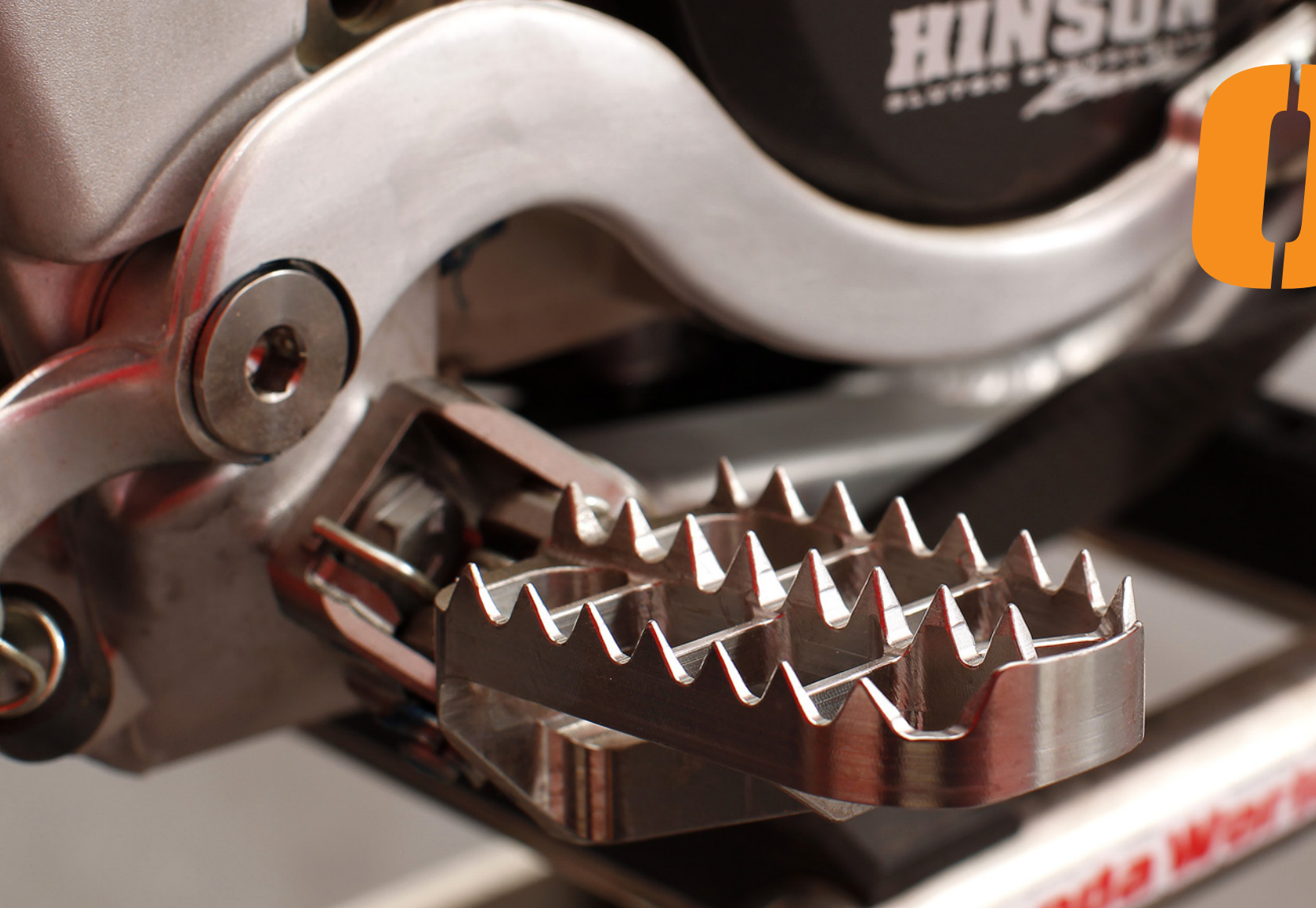
The Grand Prix was intense to say the least and after having a hand in the Monster Energy Yamaha team presentation on Friday afternoon the action was underway on Saturday even before a wide range of paddock relationships

could be reacquainted. I was lucky enough to be invited to take part in the live studio show on Saturday with Paul Malin and Georgia Lindsay presenting and sitting in front of the lights and cameras I had a only a few moments to ponder how far the cosmetic appearance of the world championship had evolved in such a short space of time.

The level of aesthetic Monster Energy had brought to Sevlievo was a 'face-lift' of the highest order and the open-access hospitality certainly did the job for the company, as it seemed that every second person in the biggest crowd yet at the meeting was carrying a black can.

The malfunction with the internet TV system Youthstream had introduced was a pity but it seemed that a lack of reliability was in the air as our British Airways flight back to Heathrow was downed with a faulty flap; hardly the way to start a season of travelling, and annoyingly reminiscent of strikes and a large plume of dust that caused chaos twelve months before.





CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MX1 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Clement Desalle, BEL	Suzuki
2	Steven Frossard, FRA	Yamaha
3	Jonathan Barragan, SPA	Kawasaki
4	Max Nagl, GER	KTM
5	Rui Goncalves, POR	Honda

MX2 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Ken Roczen, GER	KTM
2	Tommy Searle, GBR	Kawasaki
3	Jeffrey Herlings, NED	KTM
4	Gautier Paulin, FRA	Yamaha
5	Zach Osborne, USA	Yamaha

MX1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 15 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Clement Desalle, BEL	047
2 Steven Frossard, FRA	047
3 Jonathan Barragan, SPA	035
4 Max Nagl, GER	035
5 Rui Goncalves, POR	029

MX2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 15 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Ken Roczen, GER	050
2 Tommy Searle, GBR	044
3 Jeffrey Herlings, NED	036
4 Gautier Paulin, FRA	034
5 Zach Osborne, USA	032

YAMAHA SEEK INJECTION BOOST

Yamaha are the latest manufacturer to join the fuel-injected MX2 ranks with the Monster Energy team fielding Gautier Paulin on a prototype factory YZ250FM. Honda initially tried a bulky system on their CRF250R several years ago that proved to be unreliable and Suzuki were able to progress with FI through 2010. Last season's world champion Marvin Musquin rolled out KTM's fuel-injected 250SXF in the final Grand Prix of the year.

Yamaha Rinaldi Research and Development (YRRD) who directly supply the machinery to the works Monster Energy Yamaha team were able to show the YZ250FM in public for the first time during the impressive presentation on Friday night in the new hospitality rig. The engine carries a fresh piston, cylinder head, crankshaft, camshaft, valves, connecting rods, pipe, transmission, a hydraulic clutch and of course ECU. It apparently is the child of many long hours of labour and experimentation by the Italians.

FI is seen as the next step in the development cycle of four-stroke machinery within a category where performance is constantly being pushed to the limit. Whereas some teams focus on reducing or carefully managing the brute power of the MX1 450cc motorcycles (and this is where fuel injection and engine mapping lends a helping hand) in MX2 the search for horsepower while keeping in the boundaries of noise restrictions is usually the toughest quest. 'Fuel injection can improve the way the rider feels the power of the bike, especially on the 250 where the engine is pushed so hard all the time. There is less of that 'bogging' of the engine after jumps,' commented Monster Energy Yamaha Team Manager Mino Raspanti. 'From our tests Gautier [Paulin, MX2 works rider] said he preferred the character of the engine with FI.'

Fuel injection naturally requires a hefty investment and the benefits for straight-line pace are still not immediately clear over carburation. 'FI is not something you can really just bolt-on, you need to develop a whole new engine, just like Yamaha did with their 450,' counters Bike it Cosworth Wild Wolf Yamaha boss Steve Dixon, whose British Championship winning YZ250Fs run carbs and engines constructed with components from renowned engineering firm Cosworth. 'We talked with Cosworth, who have huge resources to permit this kind of development, and we didn't see the overall worth in terms of performance. For sure FI means a bike is easier to run and set-up out of the crate but if anything there is normally a compromise in speed.'



TOWNLEY LOOKING FOR WAY BACK

Understandably with all the scepticism towards his capabilities in recent years due to the prolificacy of his injuries, Ben Townley kept news of his absence from the opening Grand Prix quiet until the last possible moments. With zero race appearances since the practice smash that caused a broken jaw and concussion in February the likelihood of Townley firing on anything like full fitness was remote anyway but his vacant bike was confirmation. 'Now that I've learnt so much about head injuries I think that riders are crazy to go back

so fast on a bike afterwards; when you break a bone you know that it will take you six or eight weeks but your head is much more complicated,' said the former world champion in a press release prior to Bulgaria. 'I feel that I'm ready to go back on a bike, but it's too early to race.' By the end of the grand prix in Sevlievo there were rumours circulating that Townley would in fact try for a comeback only two weeks later in Valkenswaard; fittingly the scene of his first Grand Prix podium on a 125cc KTM in 2002.



PIRELLI PULVERISING MXGP

Pirelli are still the dominant tyre force in Grand Prix motocross with at least four of the factory teams using the Italian rubber and the company reaped the harvest at the first round of the year by taking victory in all four classes: MX1, MX2, Women's World Championship (the only round to be run with the premier MX1/MX2 calendar) and the European 125cc two-stroke. Added to the success was the fact that Pirelli also filled all three podium spots in MX1 and MX2. 'It was a truly great weekend for us,' explained Giovanni Gatti head of Pirelli Racing Service 'our riders tried the MidSoft 32 and the MidHard 454 and finally for the first

race they opted for the intermediate compound as they thought the characteristics of the tyre were better suited to the hard-pack with some loose soil sections.'

Pirelli could be looking at some hard competition in the near future. 2011 sees a hefty push back into the sport by Dunlop and their support of the factory Honda World Motocross team. The technical presence - even via specialists from Japan - is constant and impressive as Evgeny Bobryshev and Rui Goncalves attempt to give the brand the same kind of impact that they enjoy in AMA Supercross and motocross circles.

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GET YOURSELF CONNECTED

Youthstream's new strategy to focus high-quality programming via a pay-per-view website was the cause of much discussion and opinion at the Grand Prix of Bulgaria last weekend. Motocross GP racing was being firmly dragged into the digital age with a range of exclusive content available solely via www.mx-life.tv but views ranged quite widely on the merits of such a move. The implications are complicated and certainly linked to an individual's perception of just how much the internet is currently a core part of their lives.

There is little doubt that technology is advancing at a rapid rate. Our home computers are now no longer geared solely towards storage of photos, games and other domestic leisurely uses; they are being pushed as entertainment hubs. The Net is driving everything towards better 'connectability', increasing interaction and unifying mediums (TVs, consoles, decoders, HiFi, tablets). Evidence and recent statements in the press suggest that broadcasters see their future based firmly on the capability to give the user power and selection from their own living room and this will arrive via the web.

As an example (and according to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal), Youtube – that boasts 120 million monthly unique visits in the US alone – is to be given a 100 million dollar overhaul to be multi-channel and carry original programming. TVs with WiFi capabilities are already on the high street and the next generation of Apps will sync to TV shows and allow behind the scenes access and a level of connection never previously imagined.

Based on this school of thought, Youthstream's ambition is very progressive. Their philosophy might also be based on 'partial fatigue' of the never-ending fight to take motocross to bigger channels and meeting the kind of opposition that 'niche' sports have to deal with; little TV time and at obscure hours.

A different tact had been taken; almost like a 'come and find us instead'.

This has some stock and the global potential is huge (especially with it being multi-lingual), but ultimately will appeal to a dedicated fan-base in the short-term and probably won't immediately deliver the kind of audience reach that sponsors and manufacturers are always asking for. The existence of www.mx-life.tv does not imply that grand prix motocross will vanish from TV screens – indeed on the contrary there was talk in Bulgaria that the output has actually increased in some European territories – but it is a strong side-line that the promoter is excited about and is clearly investing towards with more staff resources and ideas like a live TV studio show from each round.

Considering that motocross' largest target demographic is 'youngsters' (males) it is no surprise that the sport's online image is being heavily considered in an age of mobile devices and digital social interaction; a defining concept of our time. When it gets up and running (a few glitches in Bulgaria) then I feel that it is something that should be applauded and I hope it is properly developed in years to come when internet speed and the importance of the feed into our homes becomes more crucial.



FEATURE

WEARING IT WELL...

The kit pro motocrossers use and why

Photos by Ray Archer

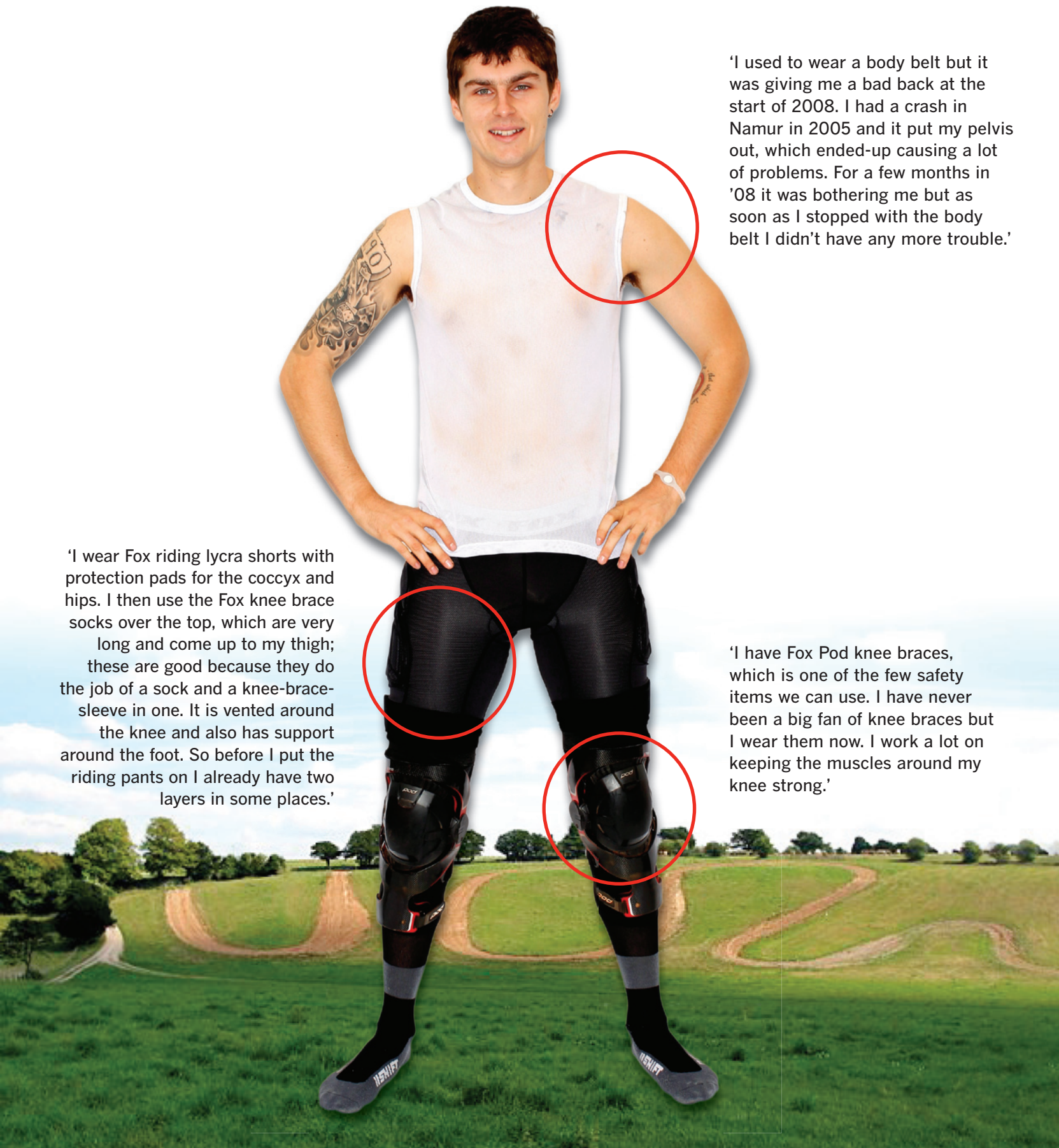
For HM Plant Red Bull KTM UK's Jake Nicholls a racing year involves fifteen Grands Prix, eight rounds of the Maxxis British Championship, perhaps several pre-season International meetings and, if he has a good campaign, an appearance as part of the three-man Team Great Britain at the Motocross of Nations. Combined with a mass of hours training on the track it means the 21 year old is churning through bags of attire. Do the math. At the very least, as a professional motocrosser and one of Britain's leading GP challengers in the high-pressure MX2 class (for 250cc four-stroke machinery), Nicholls needs to take to the gate – clean and presentable – almost sixty times between March and September; that's a lot of punishment for kit and equipment that face all sorts of weather and terrain. Here the articulate Englishman – sadly unable to participate in the opening Grands Prix of the season due to a broken leg – provides a guide as to why and what a racer wears, uses, cleans and bins in a nine month blur of activity. Including some bizarre customs and underlying evidence that a rider takes comfort and confidence from the unlikeliest of places...

'We don't have much, certainly not in the way of protection, but in motocross you wear the bare minimum just to keep light and have flexibility and movement. Depending on the races, the countries and the travelling, I will organise the kit in different places. Sometimes I can take a bag on the plane, other times it will be kept in the truck or in my camper. I always have 5-6 sets of kit in the race truck and we also have a washing machine. Some of things you can wear are very much down to how you feel on the day or at that time in your career...'

'I used to wear a body belt but it was giving me a bad back at the start of 2008. I had a crash in Namur in 2005 and it put my pelvis out, which ended-up causing a lot of problems. For a few months in '08 it was bothering me but as soon as I stopped with the body belt I didn't have any more trouble.'

'I wear Fox riding lycra shorts with protection pads for the coccyx and hips. I then use the Fox knee brace socks over the top, which are very long and come up to my thigh; these are good because they do the job of a sock and a knee-brace-sleeve in one. It is vented around the knee and also has support around the foot. So before I put the riding pants on I already have two layers in some places.'

'I have Fox Pod knee braces, which is one of the few safety items we can use. I have never been a big fan of knee braces but I wear them now. I work a lot on keeping the muscles around my knee strong.'



'On a hot day I will wear a vented t-shirt and then body armour that consists of chest and shoulder protection. On a cold day I will use a long sleeve lycra shirt underneath the armour. I used to wear elbow pads but when you do big jumps they tend to fall down. I used to have an elbow brace because I smashed my left elbow quite badly but I cannot wear it anymore because it is just too big and bulky.'

'I used a neck brace in the past but I crashed at Donington Park once and broke everything around where the brace was tied; two ribs, a punctuated lung and a broken collarbone. It was one of those stages in my career where I was not riding well and wanted to change things, so the brace went. I do specific training to make sure my neck is strong, like boxing.'



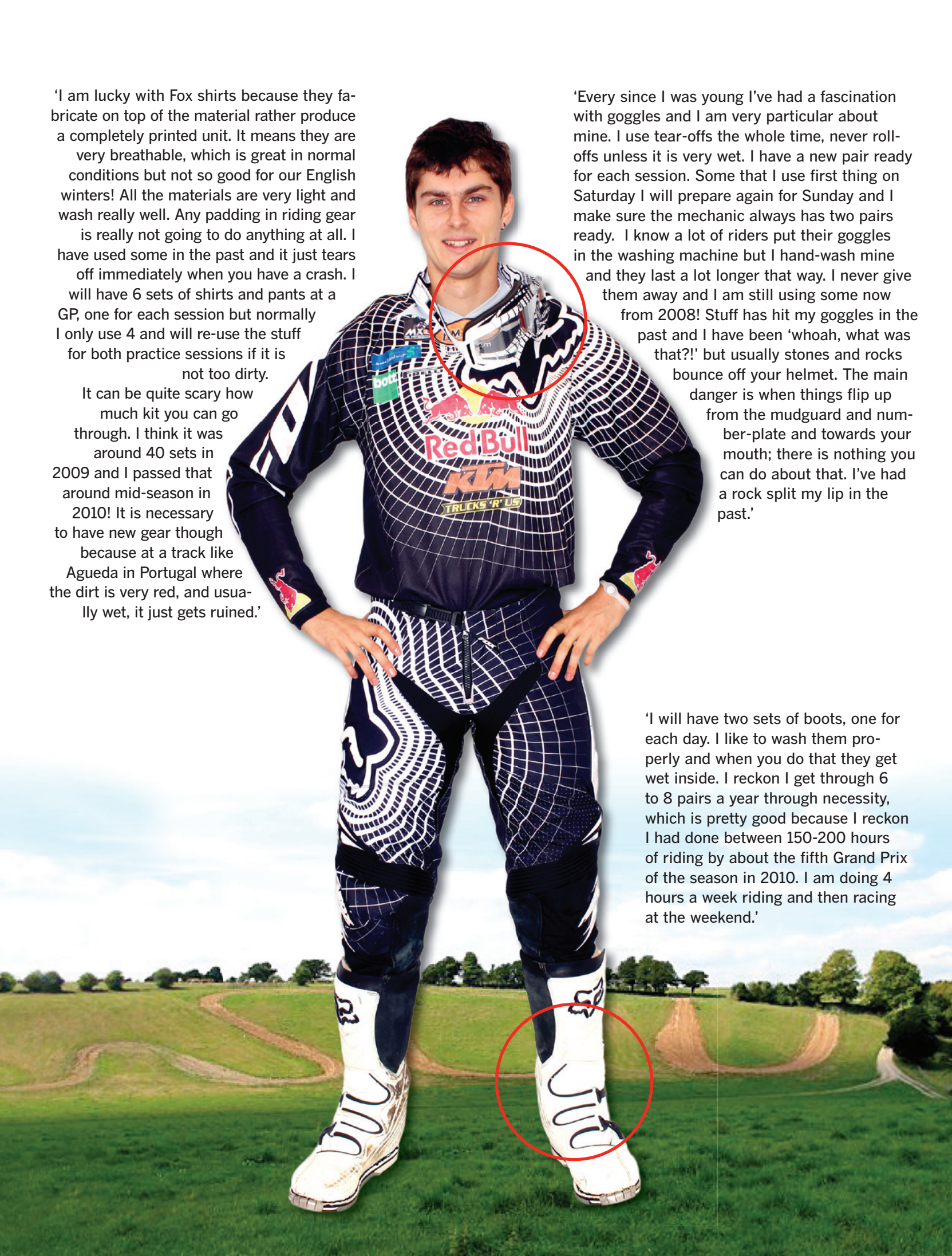
'I tape my left hand every time I race. My left arm does not straighten because of my elbow so I pull hard on three fingers. I have to tape some of my toes because I broke a few of them and they are set in a 'claw' position. I moisturise my hands because I sweat so much and that's what tears the skin to pieces. I also tape my clutch finger because I always have the lever covered and the vibration causes friction.'

'I am lucky with Fox shirts because they fabricate on top of the material rather produce a completely printed unit. It means they are very breathable, which is great in normal conditions but not so good for our English winters! All the materials are very light and wash really well. Any padding in riding gear is really not going to do anything at all. I have used some in the past and it just tears off immediately when you have a crash. I will have 6 sets of shirts and pants at a GP, one for each session but normally I only use 4 and will re-use the stuff for both practice sessions if it is not too dirty.

It can be quite scary how much kit you can go through. I think it was around 40 sets in 2009 and I passed that around mid-season in 2010! It is necessary to have new gear though because at a track like Agueda in Portugal where the dirt is very red, and usually wet, it just gets ruined.'

'Every since I was young I've had a fascination with goggles and I am very particular about mine. I use tear-offs the whole time, never roll-offs unless it is very wet. I have a new pair ready for each session. Some that I use first thing on Saturday I will prepare again for Sunday and I make sure the mechanic always has two pairs ready. I know a lot of riders put their goggles in the washing machine but I hand-wash mine and they last a lot longer that way. I never give them away and I am still using some now from 2008! Stuff has hit my goggles in the past and I have been 'whoah, what was that?!' but usually stones and rocks bounce off your helmet. The main danger is when things flip up from the mudguard and number-plate and towards your mouth; there is nothing you can do about that. I've had a rock split my lip in the past.'

'I will have two sets of boots, one for each day. I like to wash them properly and when you do that they get wet inside. I reckon I get through 6 to 8 pairs a year through necessity, which is pretty good because I reckon I had done between 150-200 hours of riding by about the fifth Grand Prix of the season in 2010. I am doing 4 hours a week riding and then racing at the weekend.'



'I stick a sanitary towel under my helmet! You sweat so much that it drips down into your eyes but there is nothing better than the sanitary towel to block that, it even has the right shape to fit on the brow section of the helmet. The sweat normally doesn't bother you when you're riding but if you have a heavy landing from a jump and it drips into your goggles then you are finished. I reckon a lot of riders use sanitary towels, even on the top ridge of the goggles as well. I think Shaun Simpson puts four in his helmet. If I have a twenty-minute race then I can just about get away without the sanitary towel but for a Grand Prix race, well, it is invaluable. My girlfriend was shocked when she saw it in my helmet last year at Valkenswaard but I took the thing out afterwards and said 'feel the weight of that'! I can practice all day with the same helmet and don't get too fussed if it is damp but at a GP I will take the linings out and dry them. I will have two at a GP, one for each day.'



'I'm sure other riders will agree that gloves are massively important in motocross. You get through gloves like nothing else. I can honestly say Fox make the best ones I've worn because the fit is so good. A glove is rarely perfect and because you are holding on so hard they wear and tear quickly. The thinner the glove the better because you want as much 'feel' on the bike as possible. I used to wear surgical gloves when I was younger underneath to keep warm but I couldn't do that now.'



On recovering after a race...

Post-race I will have a cool shower and then cycle for an hour the next day. I eat as much as I can and I can never sleep after races; I always run the race again. It usually gets to the early hours before I finally nod-off. As soon as possible I will do some yoga, which is something I have been getting-into for a year and a half now. You have to do it properly though otherwise it actually hurts!

What I'd like to see...

I like the look of this gel that the mountain bike riders use that hardens on impact. I also wish there was some better protection for your back because so many little accidents leave you as stiff as a board. A road racer can be hurting but is mainly stuck in one position on the bike whereas if we cannot move around then we're ruined. It would be ideal if a hardened suit existed but then half of the damage we do is just through your internals getting bashed around. I would love something that protects elbows while staying in place and also if helmet manufacturers could make the bottoms of helmets softer so the edges won't punish your collarbones; you only need seven pounds of pressure to break your collarbone and it is such a common injury.



MotoGP

GRAN PREMIO BWIN DE ESPAÑA

JEREZ - APRIL 3RD

MotoGP winner: Jorge Lorenzo, Yamaha

Moto2 winner: Andrea Iannone, Suter

125cc winner: Nico Terol, Aprilia



PAÑA

...AND THEY ALL FALL DOWN IN LORENZOLAND...

By Matthew Roberts

Photos by Monster Energy Europe/Milagro, yamahamotogp.com, Honda Pro Images, www.suzuki-racing.com





Check out those tyres. World Champion Jorge Lorenzo was perfect in the trickiest conditions at Jerez for his second win in a row at the track

Before the lights went out on round two of the MotoGP season at the legendary Jerez circuit I was pondering how it might be possible to top the drama of past races there. Arriving at the circuit gates I am always taken straight back to 2005 and that outrageous last-corner pass for the win by Valentino Rossi on Sete Gibernau. We also showed footage

on the BBC of the dramatic final stages of the 1996 race, when the circuit announcer declared the race was over a lap early, prompting a track invasion whilst Alex Criville and Mick Doohan were still going hammer and tongs. Alex backed-off, Mick accepted the invitation and passed him before Alex crashed making a desperate and furious lunge in the last turn.



That was a sign of Mick's ruthless determination to win at all costs and the 2005 race was the clearest example we've seen, other than maybe Laguna Seca 2008, that Valentino is hewn from the same granite. However, despite medical evidence to the contrary they are both human and as such they are susceptible to mistakes. One by Mick at the very same

circuit cost him his career and almost a leg in 1999, whilst Valentino's latest slip-up, wiping Casey Stoner out in turn one on Sunday, provided drama not seen on a racetrack since that unforgettable dust up between the pair in the Corkscrew three years ago.



Stoner less impressed than he actually might seem with Rossi's ambitious move. Amazingly the Italian climbed back up to the top five

While the star-struck marshals struggled to help Rossi back into the race they ignored the stricken Stoner, who unlike the Italian had been unable to grab the clutch to stop his bike from stalling. Modern MotoGP bikes are virtually impossible to bump start and so Stoner was left to remonstrate with the officials and

then sarcastically applaud Rossi as he came around on the next lap. "Your ambition outweighed your talent," he said through a gritted smile, unimpressed with the apology offered up moments after Rossi crossed the line in fifth place.

Lorenzoland or Lorenzolake? For the second year in succession the Spaniard took an ungracious victory dip. In 2010 he almost sank and here that right foot is about to quickly slip away leading to a fast splash. Luckily the Spaniard was exquisite with two wheels in the wet and led for 16 of 27 laps after Marco Simoncelli had crashed out.



The weather before race-day in Jerez was excellent but strong winds indicated a change was possible. Up until the climate shift there was no alteration on the time sheets. Stoner was prolific on the Repsol Honda in the dry





STATE OF PLAY

A lot has been made of Casey Stoner's reaction in Jerez and opinion seems to be split between those who think his response was disrespectful and immature and those who believe he was right to stand his ground and reject Rossi's public posturing. My personal opinion is that such an argument is an irrelevance. We have two great individual characters who are also two of the all-time greatest racers and we have sixteen more races this season to watch the remainder of an incredible story unfold.

Of course, the big winner from their spat at Jerez was Jorge Lorenzo, followed closely by Dani Pedrosa. After a nightmare preseason Lorenzo can hardly have imagined he would take 45 points from 50 in the opening two races whilst for Pedrosa the thought of standing on the podium in his home race was a

long way from his mind when he sat in a doctor's waiting room awaiting news of his shoulder problems last week. Both of those riders will be stronger again in Portugal and whilst the public and press continue to debate the drama at Jerez, for Rossi and Stoner the form of the two Spaniards will be the foremost concern in their minds right now.

The treacherous conditions at Jerez also caught out several riders who would have been set for their best ever MotoGP finish with Marco Simoncelli another victim of that first turn, Ben Spies showing the folly of 'backing off' while second and Cal Crutchlow almost placing a (recovering) finger on the wet podium until finding the gravel. A thought had to be spared as well for Colin Edwards; just one lap away from his twelfth MotoGP podium until the fuel pump on his M1 protested.





CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MotoGP RESULT

Riders

1	Jorge Lorenzo, SPA	Yamaha
2	Dani Pedrosa, SPA	Honda
3	Nicky Hayden, USA	Ducati
4	Hiroshi Aoyama, JPN	Honda
5	Valentino Rossi, ITA	Ducati

MotoGP CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 2 OF 18 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Jorge Lorenzo	045
2 Dani Pedrosa	036
3 Casey Stoner	025
4 Nicky Hayden	023
5 Valentino Rossi	020



Moto2 RESULT

Riders

1	Andrea Iannone, ITA	Suter
2	Thomas Luthi, SWI	Suter
3	Simone Corsi, ITA	FTR
4	Bradley Smith, GBR	Tech 3
5	Stefan Bradl, GER	Kalex

Moto2 CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 2 OF 18 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Andrea Iannone	045
2 Stefan Bradl	036
3 Thomas Luthi	036
4 Simone Corsi	026
5 Alex De Angelis	022

125cc RESULT

Riders

1	Nico Terol, SPA	Aprilia
2	Jonas Folger, GER	Aprilia
3	Johann Zarco, FRA	Derbi
4	Danny Kent, GBR	Aprilia
5	Taylor Mackenzie, GBR	Aprilia

125cc CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 2 OF 18 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Nico Terol	050
2 Jonas Folger	031
3 Sandro Cortese	030
4 Johann Zarco	026
5 Efren Vazquez	020

HOPKINS FEELING AT HOME IN JEREZ

It was great to see John Hopkins back in the saddle at Jerez albeit in unfortunate circumstances following the injury to Alvaro Bautista. The last time I saw John was at Laguna Seca last year. I was standing trackside at the Corkscrew watching practice and heard somebody calling me from behind. I turn around to see Hopper, a four-time MotoGP podium finisher, standing behind the fence with the punters because he couldn't get a proper paddock pass.

John has had a few well-documented problems away from the track over the past couple of years and also had major surgery to reconstruct his wrist following a career-threatening injury but he hadn't had a drink in almost a year, he looked in great shape - physically and mentally fit - and was bursting to get back racing. This year that journey begins in the British

Superbike Championship so the opportunity to replace Bautista was really nothing more than a welcome bonus. However, gradually finding his feet on a Suzuki GSV-R and Bridgestone tyres that are radically evolved from when he last rode in MotoGP at the end of 2008, he was able to qualify fourteenth and finish tenth.

Unbelievably John is still only 27 so he has a long career ahead of him and as the only member of his family to be born outside the UK we can lay claim to another Brit flying the flag in MotoGP alongside Crutchlow. I have a feeling that production bikes may not suit his style so don't be surprised if he flatters to deceive in the British national series this year but in my opinion he showed enough this weekend to suggest he still has the quality to be a permanent fixture in Grand Prix.



"Don't bin it" Bautista confers with his Jerez substitute

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RUBBER-WEAR

A lot has been said about the endurance of Bridgestone's wet tyres after a gruelling race at Jerez that saw more rubber left at the side of the track than on the side of the wheel rims. Unfortunately conditions like Sunday's are virtually impossible to predict or indeed prepare for.

A scenario when a harder compound wet tyre is required than the one Bridgestone currently bring to the track maybe happens only once every couple of years. With the logistical and economical limitations currently in place in MotoGP, bringing such a surplus of rubber to every race is simply not practical.

What is more pressing is a slight change to the current restrictions on slicks. With just two available – loosely referred to as soft and hard – the riders often don't have enough options to cope with the variation in conditions at each circuit over the course of a weekend.

A 'soft' tyre, for example, is designed to take full race distance and is often too hard for an early morning set-up experiment at a track like Assen, Silverstone or Laguna Seca, where summer temperatures can swing wildly. Even backing off for a couple of corners means they lose enough temperature to provoke a high-side; a situation that has caused major injuries to Bautista, Rossi and Lorenzo to name but a few over the past couple of seasons.

This is a matter that needs addressing before dealing with the degradation of wet tyres in races where, it should be pointed out, riders have the option of coming in to change.

GERMAN GRAFT

It was nice to see Stefan Bradl take pole position for the Moto2 race at the circuit where his father Helmut had taken 250cc victory exactly two decades previously.

Reminded of his old man's achievement in the front row press conference on Saturday evening, the young German replied dryly "yes, but I don't think he started from pole."

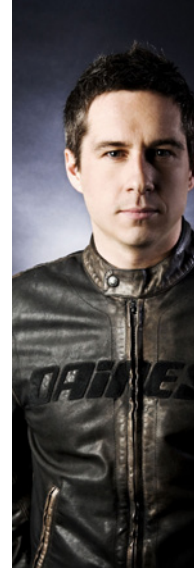
Whilst we Brits have now waited eleven years since Jeremy McWilliams' podium at Donington Park and thirty years since Barry Sheene's win at Anderstorp, our German cousins have to go back to the West German GP in 1974 at Nurburgring and Edmond Czehak for their last, and only, premier-class victory (the race was boycotted by the top riders for safety reasons and only had seven starters).

Bradl, who won the opening round of the Moto2 season in Qatar, was unable to replicate his father's achievement on Sunday as Andrea Iannone took the win and the series lead, but he looks like his country's best hope of breaking the premier-class jinx in the future.

Despite his crash in the 125cc race Sandro Cortese is another bright prospect with a chance of winning the title this year and by also qualifying fastest at Jerez it meant that German riders started from pole in two of the three classes for the first time since the Austrian GP in 1991 (Helmut Bradl in 250cc and Ralf Waldmann in 125cc).

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FLYING THE FLAG

For nineteen gloriously tense laps at Jerez it looked as though we might have a British rider on the podium for the first time in over a decade. Cal Crutchlow's steady progress through a self-combusting pack provided a gripping sub-plot to the drama at the front, the rookie from Coventry advancing to fifth place with eventual podium finisher Nicky Hayden hooked on the end of his rod when he finally put a wheel out of line for the first time all weekend.

With eight laps still to go only one of the fourteen riders still upright still had any rubber left on his tyres, Andrea Dovizioso having come in for a fresh pair of boots when languishing at the back over a minute adrift of the race lead, yet Crutchlow's pace at that point was second only to race winner Jorge Lorenzo. He had just taken a second out of Hayden's advantage in fourth place and had closed to within two seconds of the American, whose pace was dropping faster than a fully clad motorcycle racer in a lake.

All this was despite never having ridden a lap at Jerez before Friday's practice and even though it all proved too good to be true in the end, Crutchlow sliding into the gravel before remounting to take a creditable eighth, he was able to travel home from Spain with his head held high. Despite his heroics on Sunday the most impressive thing about his Cal's weekend was actually his qualifying performance in the dry, when he parked his Yamaha M1 on the third row of the grid for the second time in two races in ninth place.

As Steve Parrish observed from trackside over the weekend, Cal now 'fits' that bike and there is plenty more to come from him as the season - and his recovery from shoulder surgery - progresses.

It is early days for Cal but the signs are more than positive and with Bradley Smith leading only his second Moto2 race before taking fifth place and teenagers Danny Kent and Taylor Mackenzie both scoring top five finishes in the 125cc race, it was a hugely promising weekend for British racing in general. Mackenzie in particular was one of the standout performers of the Grand Prix across all three classes, earning the praise of @nickyhayden69 himself, no less, on Twitter with this message: @Bradley-Smith38 solid ride sunday U looked good out front nice to see hard work pay off and your boy @taylormac77 looked like the real deal.

Only one of the fourteen riders still upright still had any rubber left

It takes one to know one and of course Taylor needs no further inspiration to make it all the way to the top than his father Niall, who was unable to win a premier-class race despite an impressive career that wielded seven 500cc podiums. One way or another, I am convinced we won't have to wait another decade for the next one.



AMA-SX

ST LOUIS

EDWARD JONES DOME · APRIL 9TH

Supercross winner: James Stewart, Yamaha
SX Lites East winner: Justin Barcia, Honda

TRACKS OF MY TEARS

Words and Photos By Steve Cox





St. Louis has historically proven to be a pivotal race in the championship.

Just last year, the championship literally ended in St. Louis, as Ryan Villopoto – who was trying to claw his way back into the championship lead – went down while leading the main event and broke his leg, ending both his SX and MX title hopes.

With Villopoto out of that championship, Ryan Dungey already had enough points in hand over the rest of the field to clinch the title.

Well, it has yet to be seen if St. Louis was pivotal in the 2011 dispute but we can safely say it was pivotal in James Stewart's life. Stewart was a title contender from the beginning, as was expected, but things got off-track, so to speak, after Anaheim 2, and he has failed to win a single race since. At one point, he trailed Ryan Villopoto by 26 points. Right now, it's less than that (16), but he's not exactly an immediate threat unless something happens to Villopoto, Dungey and Chad Reed.



Barcia is not only sweeping the East Coast Lites but he also finds time for some fire-breathing party tricks



In the Lites class, however, things were basically finalised in St. Louis. The new and consistent Justin Barcia had a 13-point lead going into the penultimate round of the Lites East, and then he went out and led nearly every lap of the St. Louis Supercross. So far, with only one round left to run – in Las Vegas at the season finale – Barcia has three wins, and in

the rest of the races, he has finished second. To take matters closer to the finish, Barcia's closest title rival, Dean Wilson, finished fourth in St. Louis, which means Barcia carries a 20-point window into the finale. A 15th-place finish or better seals the title for Barcia in Vegas.



Ryan Villopoto had slight reason to fear St Louis after 2010 but rode well to collect podium number ten of the year and continue to front the standings.



No run-ins for Stewart and Reed in St Louis but the series will come to a head in Seattle, Salt Lake and Las Vegas

Reigning champion Ryan
Dungey has only taken
one win all season but
remains just five points
behind Villopoto



JUDGING THE BOOK...

Prior to the 2011 season, James Stewart and I didn't have an outstanding relationship. I thought he was standoffish and difficult to deal with, and from what I understand through a former employer, he thought I was a dick. I think we were both right.

But I try to never let personal feelings get in the way of my work, and the simple fact is that if you're a journalist covering motocross in the USA right now, being able to work with James Stewart is a big help. It's not essential, but it's a big help. And it's because I don't let personal feelings get in the way that I have a great working relationship with Chad Reed, who was once an incredible jerk.

In 2011, Stewart has been mostly easy to work with, although certain events when he ended up hurt, it was tough to talk to him, which is understandable. That being said, his per-

formance in Daytona was probably the most inspirational ride I've ever seen by anyone. And after the race in St. Louis was one of the most heart-felt and emotional celebrations I've ever seen by anyone.

When you're used to winning like he is, losing is much more difficult. And you could see it eating away at him every week he didn't win, many of which he was the fastest guy out there. Then add to that his legal troubles after getting arrested for "impersonating a police officer", and the shit-storm that came along with it, and you could see the weight lifting off his shoulders right before your eyes in St. Louis. He can't control what happens in the courtroom but the one thing he always could control was what happened out on the racetrack. And for eight weeks, he couldn't master that, either. Now, at least, he can. And that's a start.





Dean Wilson having some fun. Great scrub...

AMA-SX CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

AMA SUPERCROSS RESULT

Riders

1	James Stewart, USA	Yamaha
2	Ryan Dungey, USA	Suzuki
3	Ryan Villopoto, USA	Kawasaki
4	Chad Reed, AUS	Honda
5	Trey Canard, USA	Honda

AMA SUPERCROSS LITES EAST COAST RESULT

Riders

1	Justin Barcia, USA	Honda
2	Ryan Sipes, USA	Yamaha
3	Blake Baggett, USA	Kawasaki
4	Dean Wilson, GBR	Kawasaki
5	Blake Wharton, USA	Honda

AMA SUPERCROSS STANDINGS (AFTER 14 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Ryan Villopoto	275
2 Ryan Dungey	270
3 Chad Reed	267
4 James Stewart	259
5 Trey Canard	255

AMA SUPERCROSS EAST COAST LITES STANDINGS

Riders	Points
1 Justin Barcia	185
2 Dean Wilson	165
3 Ryan Sipes	141
4 Blake Baggett	134
5 Blake Wharton	125



REEDY READY?

Chad Reed was heading the points standings just a couple of rounds ago but it seems that ever since he had that sniff of the 2011 AMA Supercross Championship, he hasn't quite been riding like the same guy who has been out there all year. Perhaps this is because there wasn't much pressure when it was just him and his team going after the factories for fun. Truth be told he's not 'supposed' to beat the factories, so if he's doing it at all then it's like a bonus. Once he was beating everyone however, expectations crept in, and he's left searching for answers. He needs to pull it back together in the final three rounds if he's going to have a shot at the title and he definitely does have a shot, as he sits only eight points out.

PRO CIRCUIT OUT WEST

We all knew that Monster Energy/Pro Circuit Kawasaki's Josh Hansen was riding with a broken hand at the last two rounds of the Lites West before the series headed east, so we were all prepped for a fit Hansen taking on a healthy Broc Tickle – his teammate and closest championship contender – for the championship climax. However, not too long into the break for the Lites West, Tickle broke his collarbone, and word has it that the third-placed rider in points, Eli Tomac, got himself KO'd recently as well. The Lites West picks up this weekend in Seattle, where we can anticipate a mud race, with three racers all just trying to survive. The Lites West just turned into a battle of attrition instead of speed or consistency.



RYAN FEVER

Prior to the 2011 season many pundits were wondering if Ryan Dungey and Ryan Villopoto would be able to lead the title chase this year like they did last year. The reactions were not too positive in some cases. But here we are with three rounds to go, and look at the top two names in the championship chase: Ryan Villopoto followed closely by Ryan Dungey. That should tell you something. The 'Ryans' are for real. A big chunk of the doubt has been shouldered by Dungey, though, as the guy who won both the SX and MX titles in his rookie season, and for a while – with help from some mechanical failures and such – Dungey looked like he was going to prove the doubters right. But he's five points from the lead with three rounds left. He could win this thing yet. Then what will the "experts" have to say about it?







FEELING THE STRAIN

It's about now when normally I'm looking forward to the outdoors because supercross is a runaway and there are only three rounds left to go. And I haven't had a weekend off yet. Although I am hitting the point of burnout because of not having weekends off, the series itself is keeping me motivated. It's a see-saw battle among five guys that looks like it will inevitably go down to the wire in Las Vegas, which is amazing – although I'm thinking we'll lose at least one of the five mathematically prior to then; probably two of them.

But that's not to say it isn't gruelling. We just had round 14 of the 17-round series, and they have run without interruption. Every weekend there's another race. We don't get a weekend off until after round 15 in Seattle next Saturday, with only two rounds left, which kind of begs the question: Why bother?

Ultimately, I will be thankful for the break, as will the racers, but it's definitely a situation of too little, too late. If there's only going to be one weekend off, it should be no later than round 10 or 11, but there are a lot of things that come into play when putting together the series schedule regarding which venues are open, and when, and how they will coincide with Feld Motorsports' Monster Jam Monster Truck shows. And the series has to be over in time for the teams to get some last-minute outdoor testing done before the Nationals start in mid-to-late May.

Burnout is funny because it makes you start to not care very much. You know you should be working, but you can't get yourself to care

enough to actually work, so although everything still gets done on my end, many times it's last-minute, because that's when the deadline adrenaline kicks in and says, "Dude, if you don't get this thing done in two hours, you're f***ed!" That's when I begin typing away with nervous, shaky fingers – normally at about 1am.

We don't get a weekend off until after round 15, which kind of begs the question: why bother?

But if it's taking its toll on me and the other journalist/photographer who goes to every race – Steve Giberson of VitalMX.com – imagine what it's doing to the racers! You can literally see it in their faces on the starting line – especially among the five guys who are still in the championship hunt. They look like ghosts. When they're out on the track, they still put in 100-percent, every one of them, but before their own adrenaline kicks in when the gate drops, they look like the walking dead.

And then, when this title is over, they'll have a couple of weeks off (from racing, at least) until they hit the AMA Nationals at full speed. Except at least for the Monster Energy Kawasaki of Ryan Villopoto, which I hear will be lined up at the US GP at Glen Helen, thanks to Monster Energy's sponsoring of the GPs this year. And RV rules Glen Helen. The GP guys might as well not even show up, although for the sake of the race, hopefully the fans will this year.

Monstrous...

Time and a lenience towards distraction permits some creative work to be done during the racing pre-season and the two 'fighters' of the Monster Energy Yamaha team, Steven Frossard and David Philippaerts cut mean figures in this superb shot. The Frenchman and the Italian are two of the toughest racers in the MX1 class; you'd have never have guessed from this image.

Photo by Yamaha/Zanzani







ON TRACK OFF ROAD

'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at **www.otormag.com** every Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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Cover shot: Steven Frossard suitably intense on his way to victory in the first moto of the Grand Prix of Bulgaria (Ray Archer)

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